

What It Means to Be a Disciple of Jesus #2

Intro: In our lesson last Sunday, we looked at what Jesus said about discipleship, focusing on what it means to be a disciple. We learned that Jesus presented some very great challenges about what it means to be his disciple. In that lesson we learned that...

Discipleship means making Jesus Lord of our lives.

Discipleship means diligently learning Jesus' teaching.

Discipleship means patterning our lives after Jesus' example.

Discipleship means showing total loyalty to Jesus over all others (over all personal relationships, over all personal preferences, over all personal resources.)

Discipleship means making a carefully-weighed commitment to Jesus.

When we read these challenging sayings about the meaning of discipleship and about "counting the cost," we may be left with uncertainty about whether it is worth the sacrifice to become a disciple. If Jesus is asking so much, is he not also discouraging us from making this decision? In the face of these challenges and warnings, why should we want to become a disciple of Jesus?

Each of the demands of discipleship brings great blessing to us.

The choice to deny self and make Jesus Lord is to truly find ourselves.

For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. (Mt. 16:25)

Though it is difficult to imagine a life where we totally give up control, Jesus indicates that such a decision will result in us "finding" our lives.

It makes sense, if you remember this truth. Who would know more about how to live life than the one who gave us life? Who would know more about how we were made to work than the one who created us? To live in selfishness is to ultimately be confronted with personal dissatisfaction with others and a loss of the joy that comes through serving. But beyond that Jesus projected these attitudes to the judgment where those who have served in His name will at that time receive His eternal reward. He affirms that it is a reward so great that if one should gain the whole world it would pale in insignificance in comparison.

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." (Mt. 11:28-30)

The fact is, all of us have a master and some of those masters can be very cruel. To come under Jesus' yoke is not to be heavy laden with burdens we cannot carry; but instead in relieved from the heaviness of guilt, of poor decision-making, and of oppressive legalism. And Jesus promises that He is the most humble and gentle master of all and that

His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Placing ourselves under His rule brings rest to our souls.

The choice to learn from Jesus is to possess clarity and direction in life.

His teaching will give us clarity.

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn. 8:31-32)

How often we are paralyzed by mere confusion! Yet Jesus offers clarity if we will trust His wisdom.

Moreover, His teaching will give us direction.

Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." (Jn. 8:12)

A walk in the darkness is to risk a very slow pace at best and death at worst. We need the light to see the pitfalls of life. We need the light to see the path we ought to take. Jesus offers His disciples this light.

The choice to pattern our lives after Jesus is to please and glorify the Father with the result that He in turn will exalt us with Jesus.

His prayer for his disciples was:

Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world. (Jn. 17:24)

And Paul writes:

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. (Rom. 8:16-17)

By becoming disciples of Jesus, we also become children of God, fellow-heirs with Jesus and heirs of God's kingdom.

For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." (Jn. 6:40)

The choice to put him first over every earthly thing is to inherit all things heavenly.

Jesus assures us that no sacrifice we make for discipleship will go unrewarded both in this life and in the life to come.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life. (Mt. 19:29)

And he has taught that there will be a great judgment in which we will at last be recompensed to our actions in this life.

For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with

His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. (Mt. 16:26-27)

Yet even here we are not to think of discipleship as not having any benefit to us in this life. It is not "pie in the sky by and by." As one person put it, we are already enjoying a nice piece of the heavenly pie! *for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (1 Tim. 4:8)*

But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. (1 Tim. 6:6)

Conclusion: As Christians this is not only the life we are striving to live, but also the blessing that we seek. In the beatitudes Jesus connected every responsibility of discipleship with a blessing:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. (Matthew 5:3-11)

If you are not a Christian, this is the life Jesus calls you to live. So weigh your decision carefully. But if you are seeking something greater than having fun, accumulating stuff, climbing the social or corporate ladder, then discipleship is the way to go. If you want a life of challenge; if you want a more fulfilling life, don't doubt that you will regret your decision. One day you will be living in the presence of God forever.

The great deception of this world is that you can attain that state without being a disciple of Jesus. The truth is, you cannot!